

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **VV**hy David's heart smote him when he had cut off the Skirt of Saul's Rayment?

Ans. Because 'twas a sort of Lapse-Majesty: and a Violation of that respect he ought to have had for a King who was immediately design'd and anointed by God. The Rabbies say, That the reason of his being struck Paralytical in his old Age was for a Punishment to this Crime.

Quest. 2. Why did the Lord commend the Unjust Steward?

Ans. He commended him not for his Injustice but his Wisdom, as to this World, thereby to provoke true Christians to imitate him in what was good, namely securing the future, and making themselves Friends of the unrighteous Mammon.

Quest. 3. The meaning of the 8th of Rom. 21, 22?

Ans. See this before resolv'd in the Question of the Millennium.

Quest. 4. Was the Fall of Adam on the day of his Creation?— or how long after?

Ans. It's said indeed, That "Man being in Honour continu'd not. Whence some wou'd argue that Adam fell on the very day of his Creation.—But we think very far from the purpose, for neither are we sure that this Text refers to the Fall of Man, though we confess that's a probable Interpretation, nor does that Expression [continues not] note any certain Time, since he might stand both Days and Years before his Fall, and yet that be true enough that he did not continue in his Rectitude or Honour. And indeed on considering the History, we are inclined to believe our First Parents did not Fall on the very day of their Creation.—Because Paradise or Eden seems to be form'd after Adam—Gen. 2. v. 8.—after God had formed Man out of the Dust of the Ground, it's added—"and the Lord God planted a Garden Eastward in Eden, and there he put the Man whom he had formed—agreeable to the Tradition of the Rabbies.—"That Paradise was one of the Things which God form'd after the Creation of the World.—So again in the 15th, "And the Lord God took the Man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.—Then succeeded God's giving him the Command of Obedience—after which we are sure he was some time alone, which God said, 'twas not good for him to be, though how long we know not. Then every Beast of the Field and Fowl of the Air, viz. One of every sort, seem to be form'd anew by God when they were brought to Adam—and indeed it seems not the first common Creation here described, for here every Fowl of the Air, as well as every Beast of the Field are form'd out of the Ground, whereas Gen. 1.

v. 20, & 21. "The Waters brought forth the Fowl—and supposing this, that an Individual of every Species were created in the sight of Adam, it would have been a new and a strong Argument to move him to adore the Wisdom and Power of the Creator, and to keep him in his Obedience. And indeed it's pretty evident that the other Furniture of Paradise was made after this manner—For v. 8, & 9. "God, himself, "planted a Garden—out of the Ground the "Lord God made to grow every Tree that "is pleasant to the Sight, & good for Food—"Nay, among the rest the Tree of Life and "the Tree of Knowledge, which in all probability, were of a different Species from "other Trees—This however we are sure of, that Adam named all the Creatures, all Beasts and Fowl at least, when they were brought to him by God—and that with Names so apposite to their Natures; for we suppose the Hebrew-Language to be the Original, that they appear not a hasty work, nor indeed is the Number of 'em so small that it cou'd be very quickly finish'd. After all this Adam was cast into a Sleep, and his Rib turn'd into a Woman—with whom 'tis not likely he would part the First day, unless he was a very unkind Husband—Nor was it till she parted with him that the Devil met and seduced her, nor did he immediately prevail—and then she must take up some time to find Adam, after whose Eating, they sew'd Fig-leaves together and made themselves Aprons—and then, when God had expostulated both with them and the Serpent, they were turned out of Eden. All these great Incidents 'tis not very probable shou'd be dispatch'd in so little a time as one Day, and therefore we rather incline to think Adam stood longer—But how long is an unreasonable Question, since no Mortal man can be certain concerning it.

Quest. 4. Whether the first v. of the first Chap. of Gen. be'n't a sufficient Confutation of all Atheists—the first of the second of all Sadduces?

Ans. To an errant Atheist the first can be no Confutation, for he denies the Supposition on which the Authority of the Scriptures is founded, namely, the being of a God—for if he dares say there is no God, he necessarily concludes this is not his word, nor any thing else.—To one who believes a God, and pretends to believe the Scriptures, 'tis indeed a Confutation of his Atheism, but he needs it not. But we suppose the Querist may take Atheists in a more laxe sense, for those who pretend they own a God, and believe the Scriptures, or at least dare not for shame publicly deny 'em, but yet believe the Eternity of the World, or at least the Eternity of Matter, which is much the same—

same—And to these we think indeed the first of *Genesis* is an unanswerable Confutation, and have endeavour'd in a former Paper to make it good against 'em from the word *ברך*, & the others in the Context. For the first of the 2d's being a Confutation of the Sadduces—We suppose 'tis meant that opinion of theirs which denies any Angels or Spirits—The Creation of whom the Querist thinks is prov'd from those words—“Thus the Heaven and the Earth were finish'd, and all the Host of 'em, in which Host” he supposes are included the Angels—This we take to be the strength of his Argument. For the Illustration or Confirmation whereof we can produce more than one Text, wherein by this *צבא* or Host, are certainly meant the Angels. That in the History of *Ahab* and *Micaiah*, 1 Kings 22. 20. (repeated in *Chron.*) “I saw the Lord sitting on his Throne, and all the Host of Heaven standing by him. And *Neb.* 9. 6. Thou hast made Heaven the Heaven of Heavens with all their Host—The Earth and all things that are therein—And thou pre-servest them all, and the Host of Heaven worshippeth thee. And *Luk.* 3. 13. There was with the Angel a Multitude of the Heavenly Host—or the Host of Heaven Praising God—Thus we have brought all the Light to this opinion that we can, being unwilling to weaken any Argument which any may think tends to the Establishment of Religion, tho' we here desire to keep our own private opinion to our selves.

Qu. 5. In what Year was it that *Cyrenius* mentioned by *St. Luke* Cap. 2. was Governor of Syria?

Ans. The Question is too loose—We ought to have known after what Era or Computation of time he asks the Year. But however we'll answer it as large as we can. He was Governor of Syria when the Taxing or Enrollment of all the World, *monstrum universum*—All the Roman Empire was commanded by *Augustus*, in the same Year that our Saviour was Born—and that was as Historians inform us, in the Year of the World 3970. In the Third Year of the 134th Olympiad, in the 42th Year of *Augustus*, and the 34th of *Herod*. The truth of which Allegation is also plain from the History of *Josephus*, Lib. 18. *Antiq. Judaic.* “*Cyrenius*, says he, who had both enjoy'd the Consulship and other Dignities was sent by *Cesar* with a small Train into Syria to Cess, or Tax the People.

Quest. 6. Why was *Bethlehem* appointed for our Saviours Birth, rather than any other Place?

Ans. Whatever place had been appointed for his Birth, the fulfilling of the Prophe- sie wou'd have directed the People where to have found him—But there may be some particular Reasons why he shou'd be Born at that place rather than another, because 'twas the Town of *David*, the place where *Jesse* liv'd, and *David* was Born; and where cou'd be a more proper place for the Stem of

Jesse, and him who was both the Root and Offspring of *David*, to make his first appearance in the World? But there may be yet a Mystery in the very Name of the place—*Bethlehem*, which, if we mistake not, signifies “The House of Bread, and where then cou'd be a fitter Birth-place for him who was the true Bread from Heaven?

Quest. 7. In what sense that Text is to be taken, *Gen.* 49.—The Scepter shall not depart from *Juda*, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet until *Shiloh* come, and to him shall the gathering of the People be? And whether or no was it fulfilled when *Herod* came to the Crown of *Judea*?

Ans. We think it, notwithstanding all the Subterfuges of the Jews, a plain Prophe- sie of our Saviour's coming, and a Land- mark whereby any but the hardened Jews might have known it.—“The Scepter shall not depart from *Juda*—the Royal En- signs and Authority—nor a Lawgiver, &c. partly exegetical of the former Expression, for the Legislative Power and Sovereign Authority are inseparable—The meaning is no more than that neither shou'd their Line lose the Kingdom, nor want an Heir to fill the Throne—Until *Shiloh* come—a word which signifieth, Sent—He that was to come—or the Messiah, to which it exactly answers—The Scepter was not to depart from *Juda* till this promis'd Prince shou'd come—Therefore when it did pass from him, they might be sure this *Shiloh* was come. And pass from 'em it did, nay from the whole race of the Jews, in the Reign and Person of *Herod*—whose Father, as *Jose- phus* writes, was an Edomite, and his Mother an Arabian, and who therefore by some of his Flatterers was cry'd up as this promised *Shiloh*, which *Josephus* as foolishly attributes to *Vespasian*.

Quest. 8. Whether did *Jacob* sin in getting *Laban's* Cattle from him, by putting the Rods in the Gutters, &c.

Ans. No certainly, because 'twas but to obtain his just wages, he being besides more careful of *Laban's* Cattle than his own, and making good whatever of 'em was lost, as appears by his Expostulation with him after he fled from him and was overtaken—But we have yet a more unanswerable Argument that this practice of his was no sin, because it appears from what *Jacob* tells his Wives, that the thing was order'd by God, or his Angel, which is in effect the same, *vide Gen.* 31. 11, 12. “The Angel of God spake unto me in a Dream, saying,—Lift up now thine Eye, and see all the Rams—are ring- streaked, speckled and grizzled, for I have seen all that *Laban* doth unto thee—And from the same Angel it's not improbable that *Jacob* might learn the Art of the Rods; however, without something extraordinary he might long enough have put the Rods before the Sheep before they wou'd have young like 'em—at least all the Cattle cou'd not thus have conceiv'd which he desired shou'd do so.